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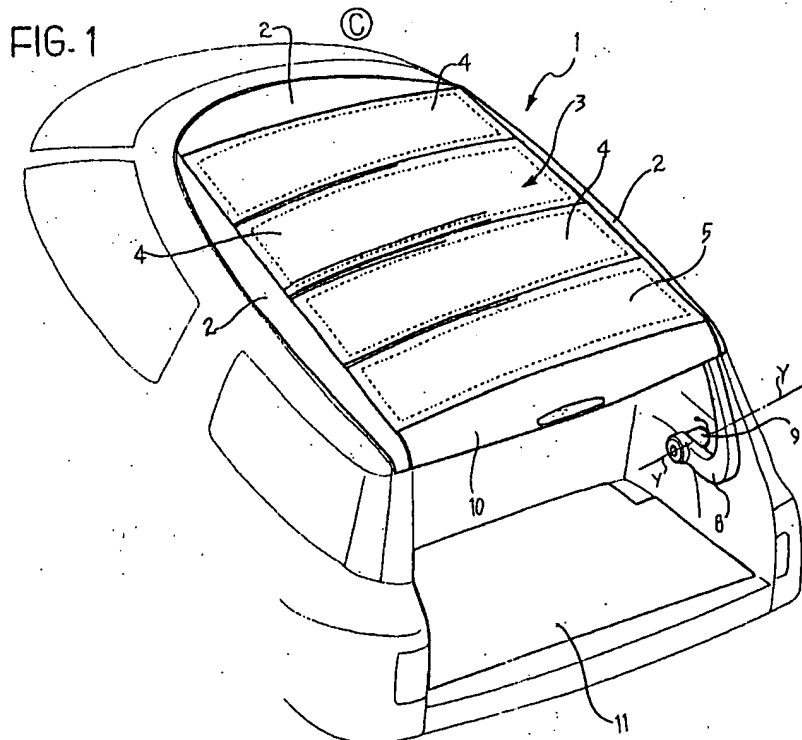
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(54) Motor-vehicle sunroof

(57) The sunroof (3) comprises a set of substantially rectangular, rigid panels (4,5), the last rear one (5) of which is not slidable with respect to the vehicle structure whereas the other front ones (4) are slidable along side guides (6) mounted on a frame structure (2) of the vehicle roof (3) to be moved between a closed arrangement (C), in which the panels are arranged side by side to entirely close the upper portion of the passenger com-

partment, and an open arrangement (A), in which the panels are stacked one over the other below or above the fixed rear panel (4), whereby all the area of sunroof (3) not occupied by the panel (4) is left open. The sunroof (3) is provided with an actuating apparatus (8,9) for moving away the set of panels (4,5) in a hidden position below the loading platform (11) of the baggage compartment of the vehicle, whereby the upper portion of the vehicle is left entirely open.



Description

[0001] The present invention relates to a motor-vehicle sunroof.

[0002] It is an object of the present invention to provide a motor-vehicle sunroof capable of shifting between a closed arrangement and a fully open arrangement and of assuming also a number of partially open, intermediate arrangements, so as to offer wide versatility of use and make available various solutions for loading on board of the motor vehicle.

[0003] It is a further object of the invention to provide a motor-vehicle sunroof which can be put all on board of the vehicle, in the fully open arrangement, without the need of leaving any of its parts outside the vehicle, so that it can be brought back to the fully closed arrangement or to a partially open arrangement at any time, even while the vehicle is running.

[0004] These objects are fully achieved according to the present invention by a motor-vehicle sunroof as defined in the appended claims.

[0005] In short, the invention is based on the idea of providing a sunroof comprising a set of essentially rectangular, rigid panels, the last rear of which is fixed to the frame structure of the roof, whereas the remaining front panels are slidably disposed along side guides mounted on the frame structure of the roof in order to be moved between a closed arrangement, in which the panels are arranged side by side to entirely close the passenger compartment from above, and a first open arrangement, in which the panels are stacked one over the other below the fixed rear panel so as to leave open all the portion of sunroof not occupied by the fixed rear panel.

[0006] According to another aspect of the invention, the sunroof is provided with an actuating apparatus arranged to move the whole set of panels (both the sliding ones and the fixed one) constituting the sunroof in a hidden position below the loading platform of the baggage compartment, so as to leave the upper portion of the motor vehicle completely open. Preferably, the actuating apparatus is adapted to be servo-operated by means of remotely-controlled actuators (either electrical or hydraulic), thereby providing the greatest convenience and ease of use.

[0007] Further characteristics of the invention will result from the following detailed description of a preferred embodiment thereof, given purely by way of non-limiting example with reference to the appended drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view which shows schematically the upper portion of a motor vehicle provided with a sunroof according to the present invention, wherein the sunroof is disposed in the closed arrangement with the sliding panels entirely closing the upper portion of the passenger compartment; Figure 2 is a similar view to that of Figure 1, in which

the sunroof is shown in the open arrangement with the front sliding panels stacked one over the other below the fixed rear panel;

Figure 3 is a similar view to that of Figure 1, in which the sunroof is shown in the fully open arrangement with the front and rear panels hidden below the loading platform of the motor-vehicle baggage compartment;

Figure 4 is a similar view to that of Figure 3, in which the first two front panels of the sunroof are in the closed arrangement, whereas the third front panel and the rear panel are hidden below the loading platform of the motor-vehicle baggage compartment; and

Figure 5 is an exploded view of the sunroof and its actuating apparatus according to the present invention.

[0008] In the description and the claims which follow, terms such as "front" or "rear", "upper" or "lower", "longitudinal" or "transverse" are to be intended as referred to the mounted condition on the motor vehicle.

[0009] With reference to the figures, a motor-vehicle roof is generally indicated 1 and comprises

a fixed structure 2 rigidly connected to the motor-vehicle structure and running along the left, front and right sides of the roof, thereby forming a substantially U-shaped construction, and

a movable part 3 which in the closed position (Figure 1) entirely closes the substantially rectangular area encompassed by the three sides of the fixed structure 2 and by the rear window of the motor vehicle (not shown).

[0010] The movable part 3 is comprised of a set of substantially rectangular, rigid panels 4, 5 (four panels, in the shown example), mounted between the two parallel sides of the fixed structure 2 of the roof. The last rear panel, which is indicated 5 in the Figures and will be hereinafter referred to simply as rear panel, is fixed to the structure 2 of the roof, whereas the remaining panels 4, which will be hereinafter referred to simply as front panels, are longitudinally slidable along a pair of guides 6 (Figure 6) carried by the structure 2. The front panels 4 are interconnected as a shutter for being moved between a closed arrangement C (Figure 1), in which they are arranged side by side so as to fill the whole area encompassed by the three sides of the fixed structure 2 and by the rear panel 5, and an open arrangement A (Figure 2), in which they are stacked one over the other below the rear panel 5 so as to leave the above area open.

[0011] Two further intermediate arrangements (not shown) between these two arrangements A and C can be reached. A first intermediate arrangement is reached when only the last front panel 4, that is, the front panel adjacent to the rear panel 5, is put below the latter, whereby only the front portion of the area of the roof, which in the closed arrangement is occupied by the first

front panel 4, is left open. A second intermediate arrangement is reached when also the second front panel is put below the rear panel 5, whereby a portion of the area of the roof equal to that of two adjacent panels is left open.

[0012] Preferably, the front panels 4 are provided with an uncoupling device (not shown) for uncoupling two adjacent panels so as to allow a selected front panel or group of front panels to be moved, while the other panels are held in their positions. For example, the first two front panels 4 can be released from the third one, so that only the rear portion of the area of the roof comprised between the second front panel 4 and the rear panel 5 is opened as a result of the movement of the third panel below the rear panel 5.

[0013] The movement of the sliding panels 4 among the different arrangements described above can be either performed by hand or, preferably, by means of remotely-controlled actuators (such as electrical actuators) generally indicated 12 in Figure 5, which will not be illustrated in detail in the present description as they are of per-se-known type.

[0014] Figure 3 shows a fully open arrangement of the motor-vehicle sunroof, indicated B, in which the panels 4, 5 are removed from the upper portion of the passenger compartment and hidden below the loading platform of the baggage compartment (indicated 11 in Figures 1 and 2) into a proper space 7. This arrangement can be reached directly starting from the open arrangement A, in which the front panels 4 are stacked one over the other below the fixed rear panel 5, by means of an actuating mechanism comprising a pair of rotating arms 8. The arms 8 are articulated at their lower ends to a respective side of the vehicle structure for rotation about a horizontal transverse axis y under the control of a respective servo-motor 9 of per-se-known type, and are connected at their upper ends with a rear extension 10 of the sunroof secured to the rear panel 5 and co-operating to support the front panels 4 when these are stacked one over the other (arrangement A).

[0015] In order to move the sunroof from the arrangement A to the arrangement B, at first the arms 8 move the set of panels 4, 5 upwards and/or backwards, thereby disengaging the panels from the seals of the roof and thus avoiding any interference during the following steps of the movement, then rotate the set of panels nearly 180 degrees clockwise until the latter are hidden into the space 7 below the loading platform 11 of the baggage compartment. Clearly, in order to allow such a rotary motion of the set of panels the vehicle will be provided with a hatchback door capable of being tilted down in a per-se-known manner, for example by 90-degree rotation about a horizontal transverse axis, so as to come into substantial alignment with the loading platform 11 of the baggage compartment. Thus, prior to or simultaneously with the rotation of the set of panels, the rear window of the vehicle is lowered inside the hatchback door, then the hatchback door is tilted down in the above-men-

tioned way, and finally the loading platform 11 is shifted backwards sliding on the upper surface of the hatchback door, thereby allowing the set of panels to be received into the space 7.

5 [0016] With the hatchback door placed in the tilted-down position, all the upper portion of the vehicle, and possibly also the rear portion, is left open, whereby also vertically cumbersome luggage, such as for example bicycles, furniture etc., can be easily loaded on board of the vehicle.

10 [0017] In case a group of sliding panels can be released from the others, as previously mentioned, for example the first two panels from the third one, then the sunroof can reach a further arrangement D, shown in Figure 4, in which the first two front panels 4 are held in their positions to close the front portion of the vehicle roof from above, whereas the third front panel 4 and the rear panel 5 are removed from the roof and hidden into the space 7 of the baggage compartment in the way described above.

15 [0018] Naturally, the principle of the invention remaining unchanged, embodiments and manufacturing details may vary widely from those described and illustrated purely by way of non-limiting example.

20 [0019] For example, although the description and the figures refer to an embodiment in which the front sliding panels 4 are stacked below the fixed rear panel 5 in the open arrangement A, equivalently the front panels can be stacked above the rear panel.

Claims

1. Motor-vehicle sunroof (3) comprising a plurality of substantially rectangular, rigid panels (4, 5), the last rear of which (5) is fixed with respect to the vehicle structure and the other front ones (4) are longitudinally slidable; the sunroof (3) being arranged to assume a closed arrangement (C), in which the panels (4, 5) are arranged side by side so as to close the vehicle passenger compartment from above, and an open arrangement (A), in which all the sliding front panels (4) are placed below or above the fixed rear panel (5), stacked one over the other, whereby a portion of the roof (3) not occupied by the rear panel (5) is left open.
2. Motor-vehicle sunroof according to Claim 1, characterised in that the front panels (4) are interconnected two by two for sliding together as a shutter between the said open and closed arrangements (A, C).
3. Motor-vehicle sunroof according to Claim 2, characterised in that the front panels (4) are arranged to assume a plurality of intermediate arrangements between the said open and closed arrangements (A, C), in each of which a further front panel (4) be-

ing placed below or above the fixed rear panel (5), whereby a further portion of the roof (3) corresponding to the area of this front panel (4) is left open.

4. Motor-vehicle sunroof according to Claim 1, **characterised in that** it is provided with an actuating apparatus (8, 9) for moving the set of panels (4, 5) in a hidden position below the loading platform (11) of the baggage compartment of the motor vehicle, whereby the whole upper portion of the vehicle is left open. 5
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5. Motor-vehicle sunroof according to Claim 2, **characterised in that** at least two consecutive sliding front panels (4) are arranged to be uncoupled from each other, thereby allowing only a group of front panels to be moved, while the other panels are left in their positions. 15
6. Motor-vehicle sunroof according to Claim 4, **characterised in that** the said actuating apparatus (8, 9) comprises a pair of rotating arms (8) articulated at their lower ends to a respective side of the vehicle structure for rotation about a horizontal transverse axis (y) and connected at their upper ends with a rear extension (10) of the sunroof (3) secured to the rear panel (5) and co-operating to support the front panels (4) when these are in the open arrangement (A). 20
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7. A sunroof according to Claim 6, **characterised in that** said actuating apparatus (8, 9) further comprises first actuating means (9) for controlling the rotating arms (8). 35
8. A sunroof according to any of Claims 1 to 3, **characterised in that** it comprises second actuating means (12) for moving the front panels (4) between the said open and closed arrangements (A, C). 40

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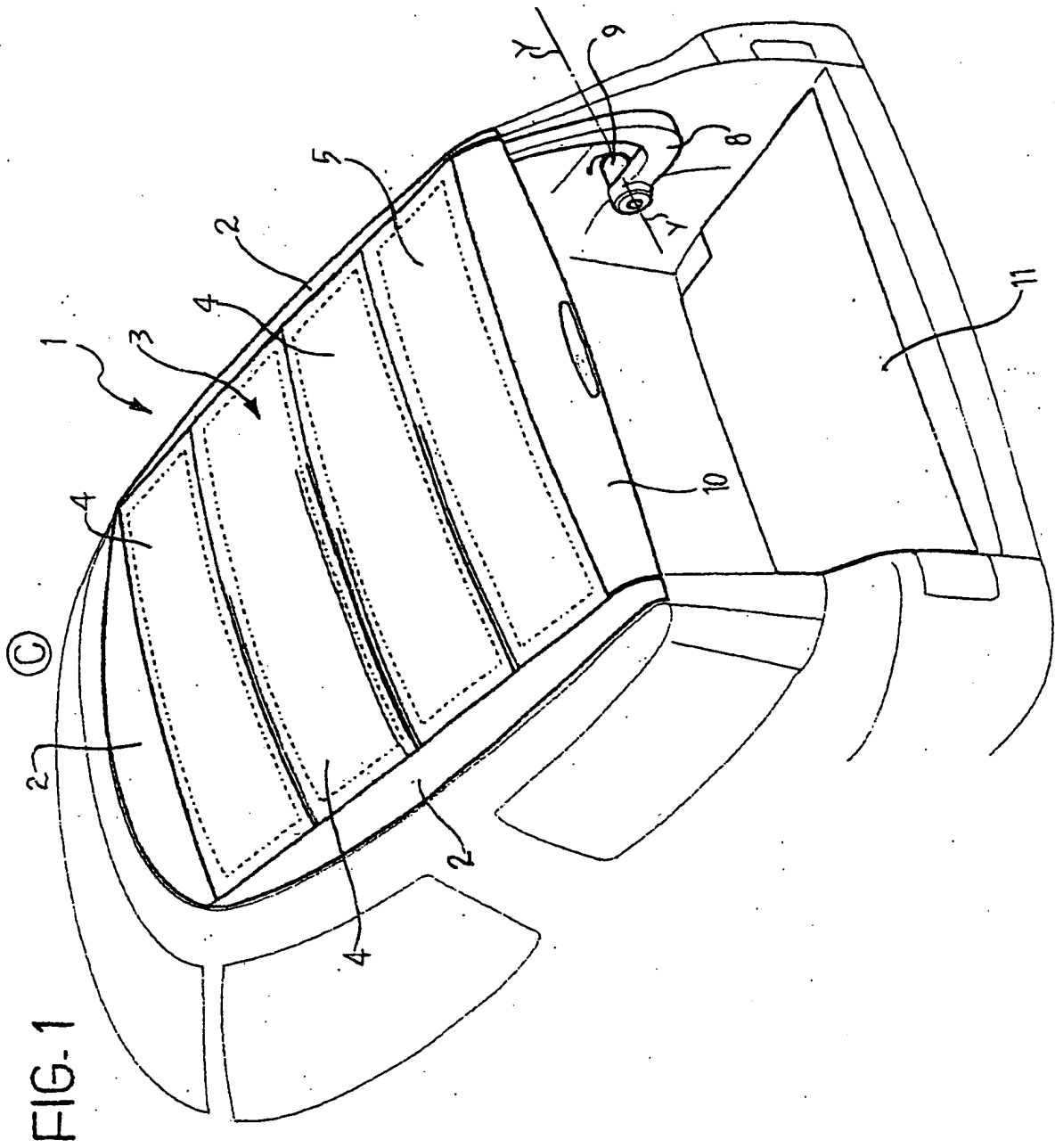
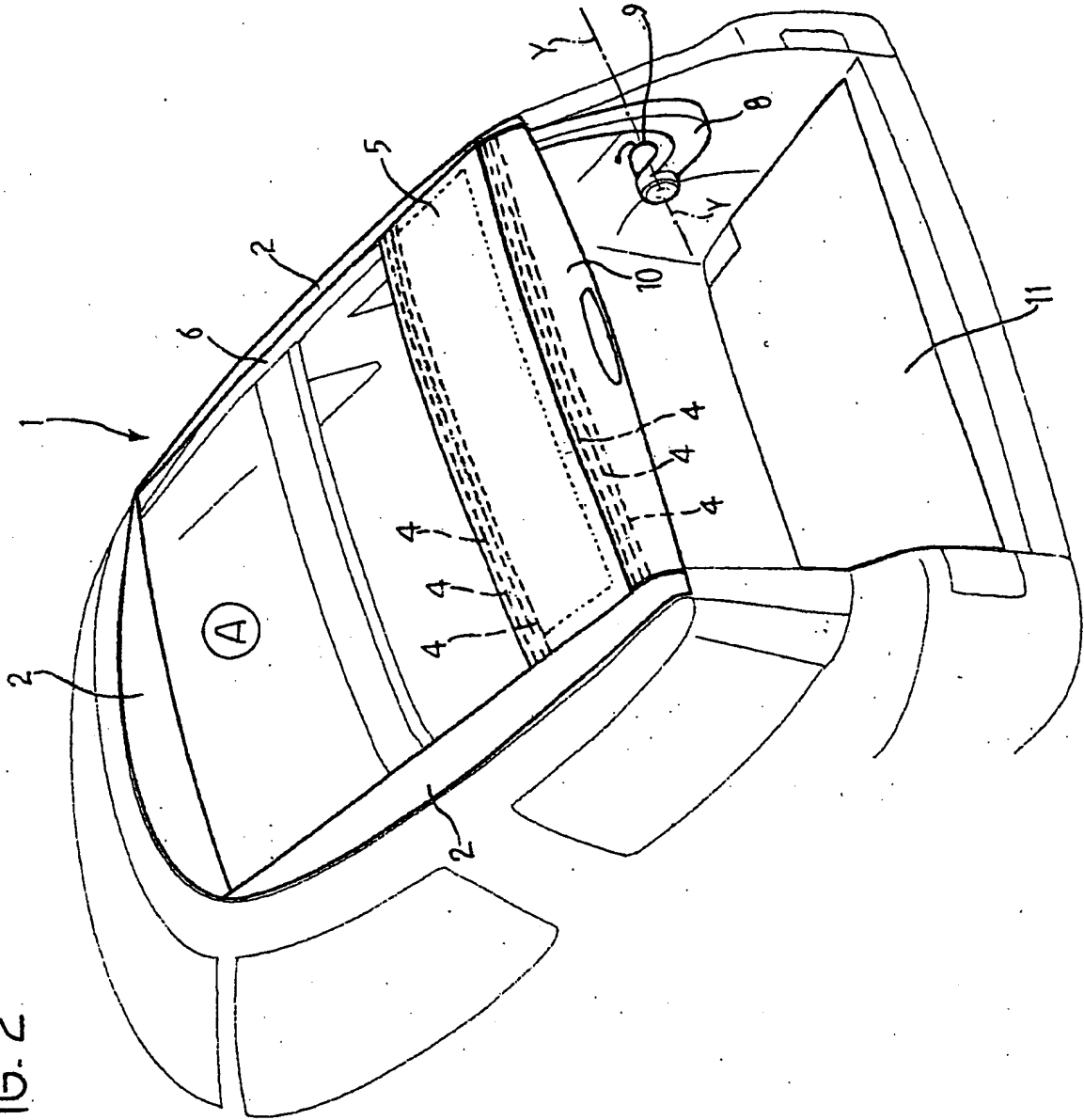
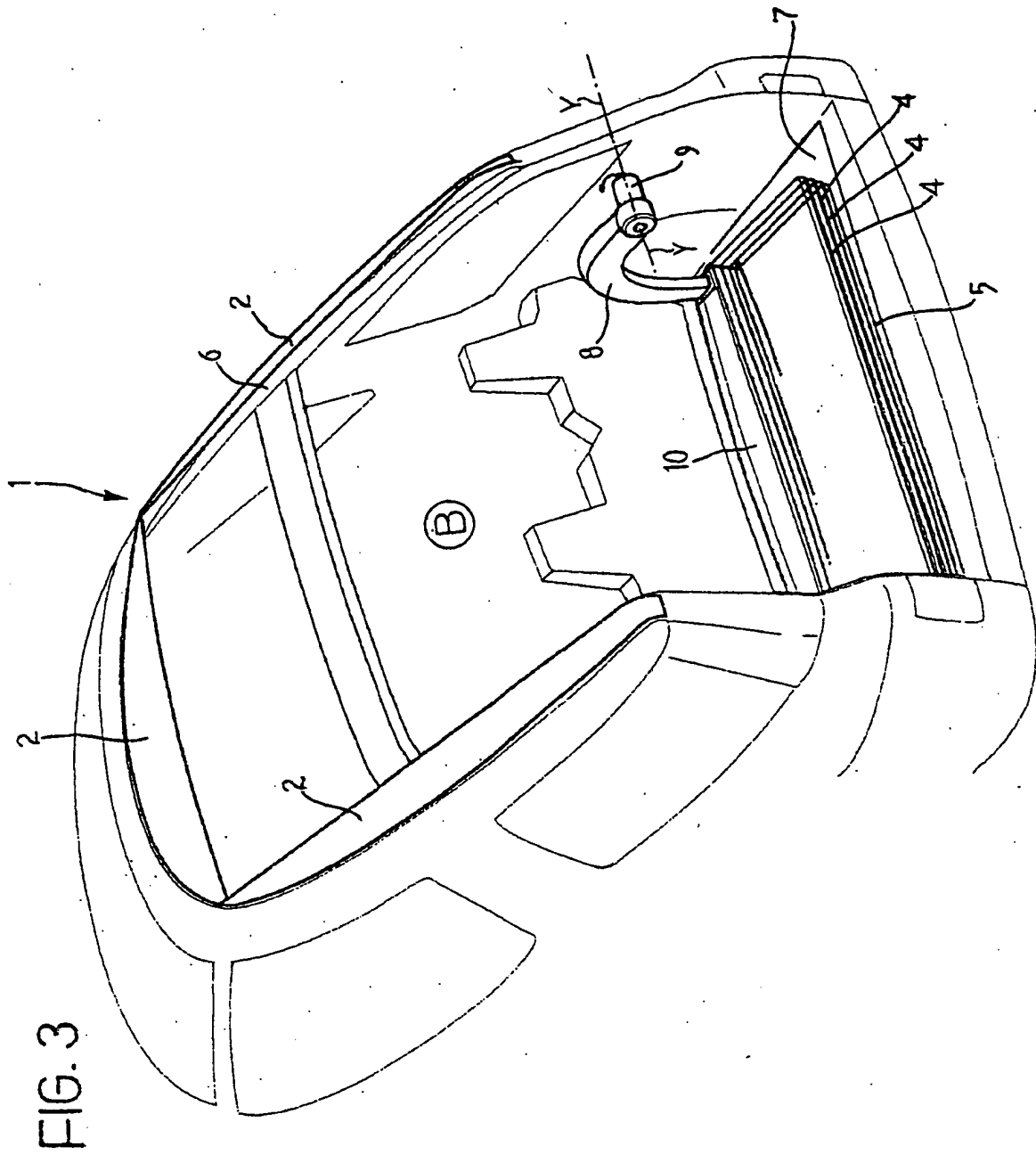


FIG. 2





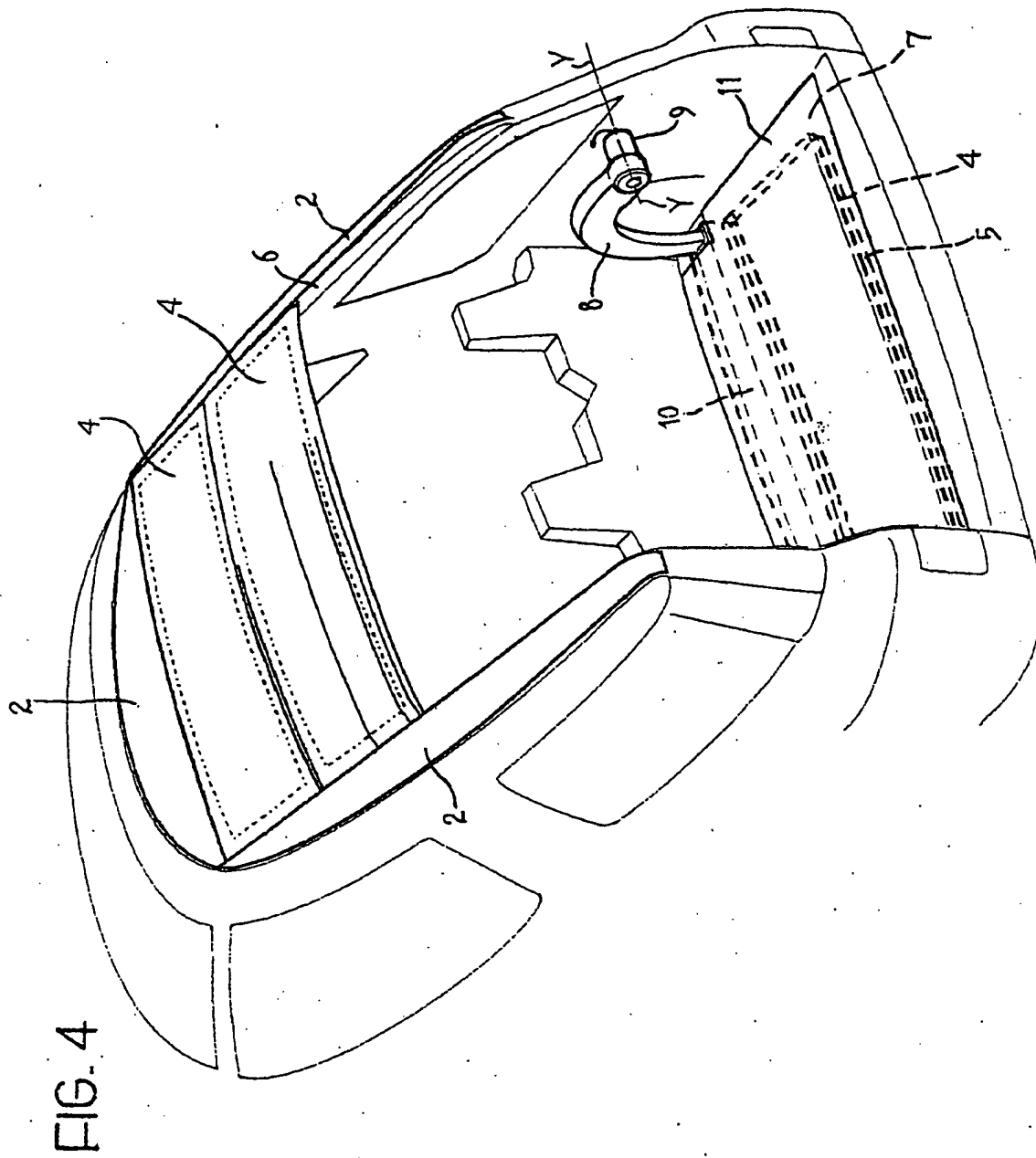
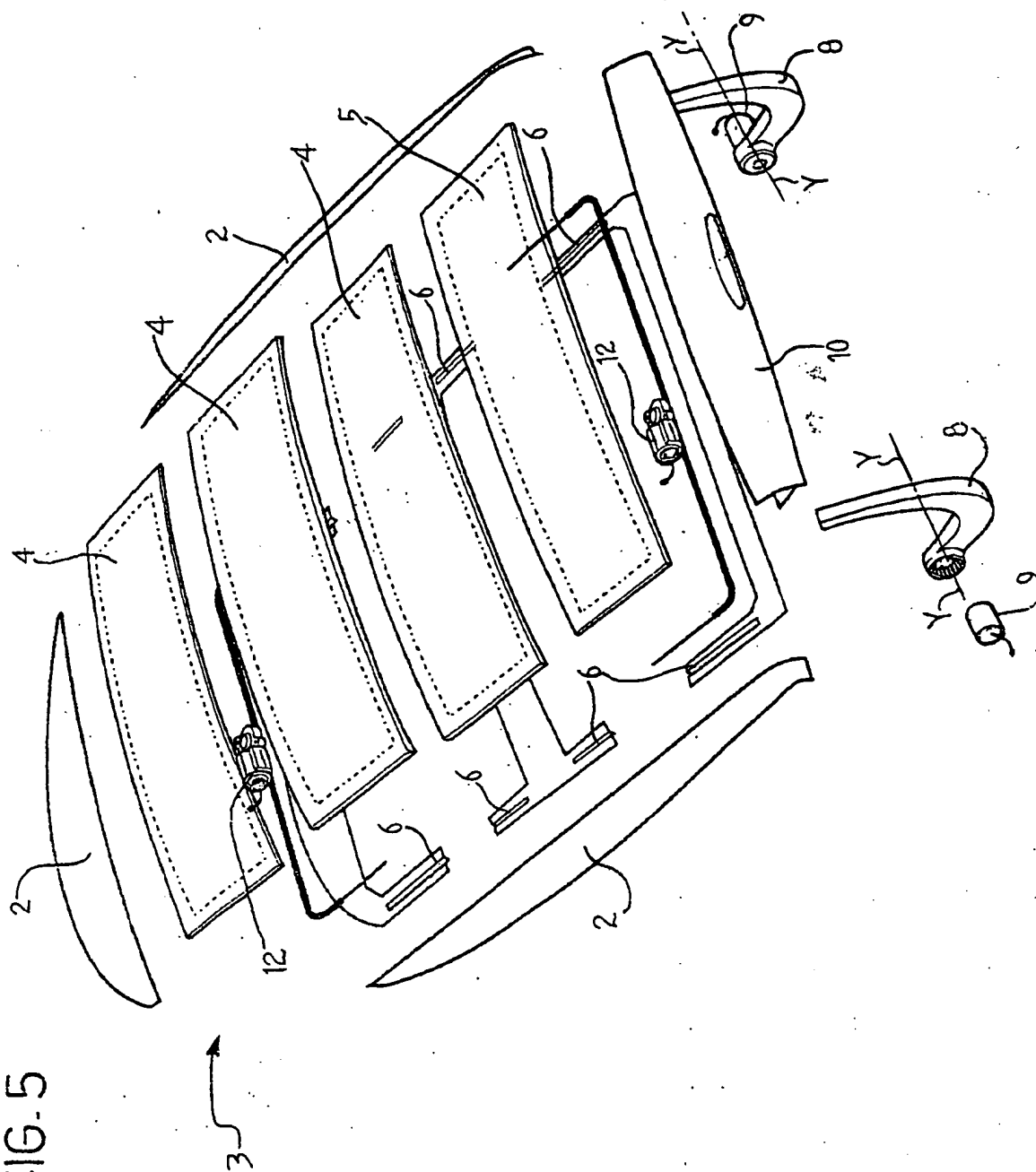


FIG. 5





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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number
EP 03 00 1604

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Place of search MUNICH		Date of completion of the search 7 March 2003	Examiner Christensen, J
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT
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This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on
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